

The Composer and the Symphony

Saint-Saëns called Hector Berlioz a paradox in human form.¹ The phrase has been much quoted, and with approval; but Berlioz was in fact an unusually consistent example of the self-conscious and articulate artistic genius of the nineteenth century. He was self-conscious in his early recognition of his own musical talent and in his determination to foster it; he was articulate in his use of words—explanations, appreciations, criticisms, excoriations—to complement his music in support of what he took to be his cultural mission. What this was can be very succinctly stated: he took music seriously, and he wanted others to take it seriously. And so he found himself in constant battle against the academics of the Paris Conservatory, for whom music was an exercise in the application of memorized rules; against a French musical culture so narrow in outlook and restricted in esthetic that it had not yet fully accepted Beethoven; against performers who refused to follow the composer's explicit directions; against the kind of conductor who could pause at a crucial point to take a pinch of snuff²; and against a public that tolerated all this with indifference because it considered music to be a mere form of entertainment. For Berlioz, music was the dramatic expression of an emotional experience, an imitation of life itself.

But Berlioz, though serious, was not solemn; and this may be one reason why Saint-Saëns found him full of paradox. Much of his prose is couched in a witty style that makes generous use of irony, even of self-

1. "Un paradoxe fait homme," the opening phrase of the essay on Berlioz in Camille Saint-Saëns, *Portraits et Souvenirs*, Paris, 1899, p. 3.

2. See the famous anecdote in *The Memoirs of Hector Berlioz*, transl. by David Cairns, New York, 1969, p. 231. This and all other references to the *Memoirs* (unless otherwise stated) apply to the English translation by David Cairns. All quoted material reprinted by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., and David Cairns.

astising romantic irony. Like his music, it abounds in startling juxtapositions of contrasting ideas, and in exaggerations both humorous and dramatic. As a result, Berlioz's writings are much more readable, and they reveal a much more sympathetic character behind them, than those of another Great Romantic Composer with a Mission: Richard Wagner. More than that, they exhibit yet another facet of the consistency of Berlioz's personality: his constant view of his own life as an absorbing drama, of which he was the hero. One might better say that these writings betray his constant attempt to live as the hero of a drama. In what follows, therefore, I have tried so far as possible to let the composer tell the story of the writing of the *Fantastic Symphony* in his own words.

Our history begins in the village of Meylan, near Grenoble—and not very far from La Côte Saint-André, where Hector-Louis Berlioz was born in 1803, the son of a small-town doctor. It was to Meylan that Mme. Berlioz took her children each summer to visit their grandfather. And it was here that the youthful Hector first encountered romantic love—at the age of twelve.

In the highest part of Meylan, right against the mountainside, is a small white house half hidden in gardens and vineyards with a wide prospect over the valley of the Isère far below; behind, a few craggy hillocks, an old tower in ruins, a wood, and the commanding bulk of the great rock-bastion of Saint-Eynard: in fact a spot clearly marked out to be the scene of some romantic drama. It was the villa of Madame Gautier. She lived there during the summer with her two nieces, the younger of whom was called Estelle. The name alone would have been enough to arouse my interest. It was already dear to me from Florian's pastorale *Estelle et Némorin*,³ which I had discovered in my father's library and secretly read and re-read a hundred times. This Estelle, however, was a girl of eighteen with a tall, elegant figure, large eyes ready primed for the attack (though they were always smiling), a head of hair that would have graced Achilles' helmet, and the feet, I will not say of an Andalusian, but of a pure-bred Parisian. And she wore pink half-boots: I had never seen such things before. You may laugh; but although I have forgotten the colour of her hair (I believe it was black), I cannot think of her without seeing before me, dazzling as those great eyes of hers, the little pink boots.

The moment I beheld her, I was conscious of an electric shock: I loved her. From then on I lived in a daze. I hoped for nothing, I knew nothing, yet my heart felt weighed down by an immense sadness. I lay awake whole nights disconsolate. By day I hid myself in the maize fields or in the secret corners of my grandfather's orchard, like a wounded

3. Jean Pierre Claris de Florian (1755-94) was a well-known writer of plays and romances. Berlioz's favorite work appeared in 1788.

bird, mute, suffering. Jealousy plagued me, pale companion of all true lovers. The least word addressed by any man to my divinity was torture to me. I can still hear—with the same shudder—the ring of my uncle's spurs as he danced with her. Everyone at home and in the neighborhood laughed at the spectacle of a child of twelve broken on the wheel of a love beyond his years. She herself, who had been the first to realize the truth, was much amused, I am sure.⁴

The relationship, such as it was, lasted only briefly. But years later, when Berlioz was thirty, a passing encounter convinced him that he was still in love with her. In a strange way, perhaps he was—indeed, was all his life. Thus in 1848, hearing that Estelle Fornier, *née* Duboeuf, was widowed and living near Meylan, he made an abortive effort to see her; but it was not until 1864, when he was sixty, that he succeeded. By this time he himself was twice widowed, ill, and prematurely aging. His renewed friendship with Estelle sustained him through his last difficult years (he died in 1869), and provided a suitably romantic ending for his *Memoirs*, which close with an account of the reunion.

This story reveals many of the leading motives of Berlioz's life. The infatuation at first sight, the hopeless longing for the "Unattainable One," the ideal of space-defying and time-conquering love: these are all recurring themes in the composer's life. Especially characteristic, too, is the apparent literary inspiration behind the whole affair: the young Berlioz's self-identification with the hero of Florian's pastorale. Equally typical, and still more important, is the way the young musician's emotional state stimulated his efforts at composition; and it is here that we find the germ of the *Fantastic Symphony*.

My youthful essays in composition bore the stamp of a profound melancholy. Almost all my melodies were in the minor. I was aware of this limitation but could not help it. My romantic Meylan passion had edged my thoughts in a permanent black *crêpe*. In this state of soul, reading *Estelle et Némorin* ceaselessly, it was not unlikely that I would end by setting to music some of its many ditties whose watery charms I then found sweet. And sure enough I did.

I wrote, among others, one intensely sad song to words which expressed my despair at leaving the woods and the haunts which had been "graced by the footsteps and lighted by the eyes,"⁵ and by the pink boots, of my cruel fair one. The pale verses come back to me now in a shaft of spring sunshine, as I sit here in London, preoccupied with

4. *Memoirs*, pp. 36-37.

5. "Honorés par les pas, éclairés par les yeux," from La Fontaine's fable *Les Deux pigeons*.

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urgent affairs, racked by anxieties, raging at the absurd obstacles which beset me here as elsewhere. I quote the first stanza:

Je vais donc quitter pour jamais
 Mon doux pays, ma douce amie.
 Loin d'eux je vais traîner ma vie
 Dans les pleurs et dans les regrets!
 Fleuve dont j'ai vu l'eau limpide,
 Pour réfléchir ses doux attraits,
 Suspendre sa course rapide,
 Je vais vous quitter pour jamais.

As for the tune of this romance (which, along with the sextet and the quintets, I burnt before leaving for Paris), it presented itself humbly before my mind when I began to write my *Fantastic Symphony* in 1829. It seemed to me exactly right for expressing the overpowering sadness of a young heart first caught in the toils of a hopeless love, and I welcomed it. It is the theme played by the first violins at the beginning of the largo in the opening movement of the work, *Reverie: Passion*. I put it in unchanged.⁶

The scene now shifts to Paris, where Berlioz, after finding himself temperamentally unable to pursue the medical career his father had planned for him, turned irrevocably to music. He studied counterpoint and composition at the Conservatory and produced his first large-scale works. These were received, for the most part, with the amazed incomprehension that was to become the standard reaction to each of Berlioz's new productions. But the crucial event of those years, which occurred on September 11, 1827, was not a musical one.

I come now to the supreme drama of my life. I shall not recount all its sad vicissitudes. I will say only this: an English company came over to Paris to give a season of Shakespeare at the Odéon, with a repertory of plays then quite unknown in France. I was at the first night of *Hamlet*. In the role of Ophelia I saw Henriette Smithson, who five years later became my wife. The impression made on my heart and mind by

6. *Memoirs*, pp. 41-42. The melody referred to is to be found at the beginning of the symphony (I, mm. 3-16). The stanza, which is taken from *Estelle et Némorin*, may be translated:

Forever, then, shall I forsake
 Beloved home, beloved friend.
 Far, far from them my life I'll spend
 In tears, with heart's regretful ache!
 O river, whose clear stream I've seen
 Pause in its rapid course to make
 A mirror for her lovely mien,
 You, too, forever I forsake.

her extraordinary talent, nay her dramatic genius, was equalled only by the havoc wrought in me by the poet she so nobly interpreted. That is all I can say.⁷

One cannot fail to note the resemblances here to the Estelle affair. There is the same literary inspiration, the same love at first sight, the same apparently hopeless attachment. Harriet Smithson (that was her real name, although Berlioz always called her Henriette) was an Anglo-Irish actress (1800-54) then at the height of her success. She did not even know of her admirer's existence. In fact, much of Berlioz's musical and personal activity during the next months was designed to bring his name to her attention. In this he achieved only limited success. She did learn of the young musician and received letters from him; but when she left Paris in 1829 the two had never met.

Berlioz, undaunted, continued to nourish his passion. To Humbert Ferrand (d. 1805-68), a young poet who had become Berlioz's close friend and constant correspondent, he wrote on February 6, 1830:

After a period of calm violently disturbed by the composition of the *Élégie en prose*, which is the last of my Songs, I have just been plunged again into all the tortures of an endless and unquenchable passion, without cause, without purpose. She is still in London, and yet I seem to feel her around me; I hear my heart pounding, and its beats set me going like the piston strokes of a steam engine. Each muscle of my body trembles with pain.—Useless!—Frightening!—

Oh! Unhappy woman! If she could for one moment conceive all the poetry, all the infinity of such a love, she would fly to my arms, even if she must die from my embrace.

I was on the point of beginning my grand symphony (*Episode from the Life of an Artist*), in which the development of my infernal passion is to be depicted; I have it all in my head, but I can write nothing. Let's wait.⁸

It was at this point that Berlioz heard, and for a time believed, malicious gossip connecting Miss Smithson with her manager. This was a painful blow, but it brought him to his senses—and enabled him to continue the composition of his symphony. His disillusionment with his beloved apparently had a decisive effect on the final form of the work. On April 16 he wrote to Ferrand:

. . . since my last letter, I have gone through some terrible squalls, my ship has cracked up badly, but it has at last righted itself; now it sails

7. *Memoirs*, p. 95.

8. Hector Berlioz, *Lettres intimes*, Paris, 1882, pp. 63-64. This letter and those that follow are translated by the editor.

fairly well. Frightful facts, whose truth I cannot doubt, have started me toward a cure; and I believe that it will be as complete as my tenacious spirit can allow. I have just confirmed my resolution by a work that satisfies me completely. Here is its subject, which will be published in a program and distributed in the hall on the day of the concert.

Episode from the Life of an Artist (grand fantastic symphony in five parts).

FIRST MOVEMENT: double, made up of a short adagio, immediately followed by a fully developed allegro (*vague des passions*,⁹ aimless reveries; frenzied passion with all its fits of tenderness, jealousy, fury, fears, etc., etc.).

SECOND MOVEMENT: *Scene in the Country* (adagio, thoughts of love and hope troubled by dark presentiments).

THIRD MOVEMENT: *A Ball* (brilliant and stirring music).

FOURTH MOVEMENT: March to the Scaffold (fierce, pompous music).

FIFTH MOVEMENT: *Dream of a Witches' Sabbath*.

Now, my friend, here is how I have put together my novel, or rather my tale, whose hero you will have no difficulty in recognizing.

I imagine that an artist, gifted with a vivid imagination, finding himself in that state of mind that Chateaubriand has depicted so admirably in *René*,¹⁰ sees for the first time a woman who embodies the ideal of beauty and fascination that his heart has long been seeking; he falls desperately in love with her. As the result of an odd whim, whenever the image of the loved one appears before his mind's eye it is accompanied by a musical thought in whose character he finds a grace and a nobility akin to those he attributes to his beloved. This double *idée fixe* pursues him incessantly; that is the reason for the constant appearance, in every movement of the symphony, of the chief melody of the first allegro (No. 1).

After periods of great agitation, he begins to entertain hope; he believes that his love is returned. Finding himself one day in the country, he hears in the distance two shepherds piping a *vanz des vaches*¹¹ in dialogue; this pastorale immerses him in a delightful reverie (No. 2). The principal melody reappears for a moment against the motifs of the adagio.

9. An almost untranslatable phrase coined by (François René, Vicomte de) Chateaubriand (1768-1848), who was one of the seminal influences of the romantic movement in French literature. By "le vague des passions" he meant aimlessness of passion, emotional uncertainty—the state of mind in which one experiences passionate emotions of great intensity, yet without any definite object. It is especially characteristic of young people emerging from adolescence, aware of their great emotional potential yet vague as to its proper direction. See Jacques Barzun, *Berlioz and the Romantic Century*, 3rd ed., New York, 1969, I, 162-63.

10. One of the author's best-known works. It first appeared as a semifictional episode in *La Génie du christianisme* (1802), but was later published separately.

11. A kind of melody, typically played on the alphorn, used by herdsmen in the mountains to call their cows.

He goes to a ball, but the uproar of the party fails to distract him; his *idée fixe* returns to trouble him, and the beloved melody makes his heart pound during a brilliant waltz (No. 3).

In a fit of despair, he poisons himself with opium; but, instead of killing him, the narcotic induces a horrible vision. In the course of it he believes that he has killed his beloved, has been condemned to death, and witnesses his own execution. March to the scaffold; a huge procession of headsmen, soldiers, populace. At the end, the *melody* reappears once more, like a last thought of love, interrupted by the fatal blow (No. 4).

He sees himself surrounded by a foul assembly of sorcerers and devils, come together to celebrate the sabbath. They call afar. At last the *melody* arrives. Hitherto it had appeared only in graceful form, but now it has become a vulgar tune, trivial and mean; it is the loved one coming to the sabbath to attend the funeral procession of her victim. She is now only a prostitute, fit to take part in such an orgy. Then the ceremony begins. The bells ring, the whole infernal crew prostrate themselves, a chorus sings the plainchant sequence of the dead (*Dies irae*), two other choruses repeat it, parodying it in burlesque fashion. Then finally the sabbath round-dance begins to whirl; in its most violent outburst, it mingles with the *Dies irae*, and the dream is over (No. 5).

There, my friend, is the sketch of what I have done in this huge symphony. I have just written the last note. If I can be ready on Whitsunday, May 30, I shall give a concert at the Nouveautés¹² with an orchestra of two hundred and twenty musicians. I'm afraid I won't be able to get the parts copied. Right now I'm a dolt; the frightful mental effort that produced my work has tired out my imagination, and I wish I could spend all my time sleeping and resting. But, if the brain sleeps, the heart is wakeful, and I am acutely aware of missing you. Oh, my friend, shan't I be seeing you again?¹³

Such was Berlioz's first disclosure of the plan of his symphony, his first statement of its program. Except for the details of the pastorale and its position before the waltz (the two were soon to be reversed), the outline is substantially the one familiar to us today.

A few weeks later, as if afraid that his friend might take amiss his symbolically brutal treatment of Miss Smithson through the parody of her musical counterpart, he wrote (May 13):

My revenge is not too severe. Besides, it wasn't in that spirit that I wrote the *Dream of a Witches' Sabbath*. I don't want to take revenge. I pity her and despise her. She is an ordinary woman, gifted with an instinctive

12. Théâtre des Nouveautés, a Parisian theater that specialized in musical productions.

13. *Lettres intimes*, pp. 65-69.

genius for expressing lacerations of the human soul that she has never felt, and incapable of conceiving a great and noble passion such as mine for her.¹⁴

It is interesting to contrast these outpourings with the account of the same period that Berlioz gave in his *Memoirs*, written over twenty years later. Here are no reference to personal suffering, no mention of the calumny against Miss Smithson (which had, by this time, long been discredited). Instead, the composer reveals a literary source of inspiration: Goethe's *Faust*, which he was reading in French translation. The immediate musical result of this encounter was a kind of cantata entitled *Eight Scenes from Faust*; its ultimate fruit, much later, was the "dramatic legend" *The Damnation of Faust*. But Berlioz insists that the *Fantastic Symphony*, too, had its connections with Goethe's play.

Immediately after the composition of the *Faust* pieces, and still under the influence of Goethe's poem, I wrote my *Fantastic Symphony*: very slowly and laboriously in some parts, with extraordinary ease in others. The adagio (the Scene in the Country), which always affects the public and myself so keenly, cost me nearly a month's arduous toil; two or three times I gave it up. On the other hand, the March to the Scaffold was written in a night. But I continued to make considerable changes to both movements, and to the rest of the work, over the course of several years.¹⁵

Certain critics, notably Tom S. Wotton,¹⁶ have deduced, from very flimsy premises, a much closer relationship between *Faust* and the symphony. Berlioz had been working not only on songs from the play but also on a ballet on the subject, which he hoped would be accepted by the Paris Opera. It never was, and the music, at least in that form, has not survived; but some of it may have been preserved in the *Ball* and the *Witches' Sabbath*. Ernest Newman¹⁷ wants to find the origin of the Pastorale there too. Wotton suggests that this movement came from *Les Francs-juges*, an unfinished opera of the same period.

All this is pure speculation. More serious, because based on evidence—controversial, to be sure—in the manuscript, is Adolphe Boschot's insistence that the entire *March to the Scaffold* was lifted, almost verbatim, from the same opera, where it served as a "March of the Guard."¹⁸ This charge touched off a furious debate between Boschot and

14. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

15. *Memoirs*, p. 126.

16. *Berlioz: Four Works*, London, 1929, pp. 5-6.

17. See his edition of the *Memoirs*, New York, 1932, p. 98, n. 1.

18. *La Jeunesse d'un romantique*, Paris, 1906, pp. 393-94.

Berlioz's staunch defender Julien Tiersot.¹⁹ For a long time the question remained unsettled. Barzun, for example, found the evidence "inconclusive."²⁰ But a fresh look at the autographs of the symphony and of surviving fragments of the opera has recently led Hugh Macdonald to make a watertight case for Boschot's attribution (although not for Boschot's refusal to accept Berlioz's claim to have written the *March* in a single night).²¹

Certainly Berlioz did not hesitate to borrow from himself. We have already seen one example of this in his use of the "Estelle" theme in the opening Largo. Another case is the *idée fixe*: this was taken from a cantata, *Herminie*, written in 1828 in an unsuccessful effort to obtain the Prix de Rome. But there seems to be no justification for the view that the whole symphony was a hodgepodge put together from whatever used goods, leftovers, and scraps the composer found at hand. The unity of the symphony, which, as our analysis will later try to show, goes much deeper than the mere recurrence of the *idée fixe*, speaks out clearly against such a verdict.

To return to our narrative: the first scheduled performance of the symphony proved to be abortive. The Théâtre des Nouveautés turned out to be ill-equipped for such an undertaking. Berlioz's hundred and thirty musicians, even though a considerably smaller number than his hoped-for two hundred and twenty, were too many for the resources of the hall. It was not until the following winter that the symphony received its première.

The intervening months had been eventful ones for the composer. He had fallen in love again, this time with Camille Moke (1811-75), a young pianist who apparently mingled virtuosity and personal charm in equal measure. For once Berlioz had chosen an approachable object, one who encouraged his attentions. (She was evidently all too approachable, and not only by Berlioz.) For this reason, when he was finally awarded the coveted Prix de Rome that October, he was not as pleased as he might have been: he had to leave Paris and his new beloved. Before going, however, he wished to present to the public both his prize-winning cantata, *Sardanapalus*, and the *Fantastic Symphony*.

. . . I organized a concert at the Conservatoire at which the academic offering figured along with the *Fantastic Symphony*, a work that had not

19. See *Le Ménestrel*, *passim*, May 20-Aug. 5, 1906.

20. *Op. cit.*, I, 160, n. 23.

21. "Hector Berlioz 1969—A Centenary Assessment," *Adam*, Nos. 331-33, 1969, pp. 35-47.

yet been heard. Habeneck²² undertook to conduct and all the players, with a generosity for which I shall always be profoundly grateful, for the third time gave their services.

On the day before the concert, Liszt called on me. It was our first meeting. I spoke of Goethe's *Faust*, which he confessed that he had not read, but which he soon came to love as much as I. We felt an immediate affinity, and from that moment our friendship has grown ever closer and stronger. He came to the concert and was conspicuous for the warmth of his applause and his generally enthusiastic behaviour.

The performance was by no means perfect—it hardly could be, with works of such difficulty and after only two rehearsals. But it was good enough to give a reasonable idea of the music. Three of the movements of the symphony, the Waltz, the March to the Scaffold and the Witches' Sabbath, created a sensation; the March especially took the audience by storm. The Scene in the Country made no impression at all. But it bore little resemblance to the present version. I made up my mind at once to rewrite it. Ferdinand Hiller,²³ who was then in Paris, gave me some excellent advice which I endeavoured to profit by.

The cantata was well performed; the conflagration caught fire at the appointed time, the palace crashed in ruins. Altogether it was a great success. A few days later the watchdogs of the Press pronounced their verdicts, some for, some against, both equally vehement. The hostile critics nearly all blamed me for the wrong things. Instead of pointing out the palpable defects in both works—serious defects which in the case of the symphony it took me several years of the most diligent labour to expunge—they attacked the absurd ideas I was supposed to have, though I had never had them, the crudeness of certain modulations which were not there at all, the systematic failure to observe certain fundamental rules of music which I had faithfully observed, and the neglect of certain musical procedures which I had employed precisely in those passages where their absence was deplored. I must confess my partisans too have often been given to crediting me with ridiculous and totally alien intentions. The amount of fatuous theorizing and sheer foolishness poured forth by French critics in praise as well as execration of my music since that time beggars description. Two or three men at the most had the sense and intelligence, when I appeared on the scene, to reserve judgment and write about me with moderation. But critics who are both knowledgeable and perceptive, who combine imagination, sensitivity and an unprejudiced mind and are capable of assessing me sanely and of understanding what I am aiming at, are few and far between even now. In the early years of my career they did not exist at all; and even had they existed, the rare and far from expert performances

22. François-Antoine Habeneck (1781–1849), the snuff-taking conductor, who was nevertheless one of the best in Paris at the time.

23. Ferdinand Hiller (1811–85), German pianist, conductor, and composer. He was a good friend of Berlioz and, later, of Mendelssohn.

of my works to be heard then would have left a great deal to their imaginations.²⁴

December 5, 1830, was the date, and it is an important one. It marked the end of Berlioz's apprenticeship and the beginning of his career as a professional composer, and it vividly brought to the attention of the public the fact that it was entering a new musical era. For despite the many traditional and even eclectic elements of the symphony, despite its obeisance to classical formal procedures, despite the composer's insistence on his harmonic orthodoxy, this music *sounded* like no music ever before heard. The proof of its great originality is that today, almost a century and a half later, it still sounds like no other music; and not very long ago critics were still attacking it for its disregard of accepted procedures.²⁵

Probably most of the audience at that historic concert failed to grasp Berlioz's harmonic boldness and melodic freshness, or were put off by them; but even they must have realized that the composer was using the orchestra in a new way. Not only was he assigning quasi-dramatic roles to one instrument or section after another, but he was assembling, from the orchestral ensemble as a whole, one huge virtuoso instrument—much as Chopin (to pursue a comparison suggested by Schumann) created his new sound by emphasizing both the individual character of the piano's various melodic ranges and the harmonic unification of the entire keyboard by the use of the pedal. Berlioz's sound has been in the ears of composers ever since, even when they have reacted most strongly against it. And though refined in his later works, it is present in every essential in the *Fantastic Symphony*. As Barzun says, "It is through that work that he first became known, and from it one can date his unremitting influence on nineteenth-century composers."²⁶

Berlioz went to Rome, and one of the labors that occupied him during his residence at the Academy was his revision of the symphony, especially the *Scene in the Country* and the *Ball*. While he was working on the latter he heard appalling news about Mlle. Moke, now (so he thought) his fiancée. This time it was no calumny: she was indeed marrying Camille Pleyel, the pianist and piano maker. The news plunged Berlioz into a fit of desperation that precipitated one of the most ludi-

24. *Memoirs*, pp. 139–40.

25. See, for example, Donald Francis Tovey, *Essays in Musical Analysis*, London, 1939, VI, 44–50.

26. *Op. cit.*, p. 151.

crous escapades of his life. The story is too long to relate here, but it is too good to miss: it can be found in Chapter 34 of the *Memoirs*.²⁷

He was also compiling and completing the strange mélange eventually to be called *Lélio*, or *The Return to Life*. This was designed as a sequel to the symphony, constituting Part II of the *Episode from the Life of an Artist*. It was to be staged as a *mélologue*, or musical monodrama—a playlet whose single character, the reawakening artist, evokes through his memories and fantasies the various movements of the work. Eager to arrange a performance at which the revised symphony and its companion piece could be heard together, Berlioz obtained permission to leave Rome before his two-year term had elapsed. After a few months at home he returned to Paris in November, 1832.

What happened then is again best told in his own words.

My old apartment in the rue Richelieu where I lived before going to Rome had, I discovered, been let. Some impulse moved me to take rooms in the house opposite, 1 rue Neuve-Saint-Marc, which Miss Smithson had at one time occupied. Next day, meeting the old servant who had for many years been housekeeper to the establishment, I asked what had become of Miss Smithson and whether she had heard any news of her. "But sir, didn't you . . . She's in Paris, she was staying here only a few days ago. She left the day before yesterday and moved to the rue de Rivoli. She was in the apartment that you have now. She is director of an English company that's opening next week." I stood aghast at the extraordinary series of coincidences. It was fate. I saw it was no longer possible for me to struggle against it. For two years I had heard nothing of the fair Ophelia; I had had no idea where she was, whether in England, Scotland or America; and here I was, arriving from Italy at exactly the moment when she reappeared after a tour of northern Europe. We had just missed meeting each other in the same house; I had taken the apartment that she had left the previous evening.

A believer in the magnetic attractions and secret affinities of the heart would find in all this some fine arguments to support his theories. Without going so far, I reasoned as follows: I had come to Paris to have my new work (the monodrama) performed. If I went to the English theatre and saw her again before I had given my concert, the old delirium tremens would inevitably seize me. As before, I would lose all independence of will and be incapable of the attention and concentrated effort which the enterprise demanded. Let me first give my concert. Afterwards I would see her, whether as Ophelia or as Juliet, even if it killed me; I would give myself up to the destiny which seemed to pursue me, and not struggle any more.

27. Pp. 152-58. Pleyel (1788-1855) soon regretted the marriage. See *Memoirs*, pp. 553-54, note on Camille Moke.

Therefore, though the dread Shakespearean names beckoned to me daily from the walls of Paris, I resisted their blandishments and the concert was arranged.

The programme consisted of my Fantastic Symphony followed by its sequel *Lélio* or *The Return to Life*, the monodrama which forms the second part of the "Episode in the Life of an Artist." The subject of this musical drama, as is known, was none other than my love for Miss Smithson and the anguish and "bad dreams" it had brought me. Now consider the incredible chain of accidents which follows.

Two days before the concert—which I thought of as a farewell to art and life—I was in Schlesinger's music shop²⁸ when an Englishman came in and almost immediately went out again. "Who was that?" I asked Schlesinger, moved by a curiosity for which there was no rational motive. "That's Schutter, who writes for *Galvani's Messenger*. Wait a moment," he added, striking his forehead, "I have an idea. Let me have a box for your concert. Schutter knows Miss Smithson. I'll ask him to take her the tickets and persuade her to come." The suggestion made me shudder, but I lacked the strength of mind to reject it. I gave him the tickets. Schlesinger ran after Schutter, caught him up, and doubtless explained what a stir the presence of the famous actress would create. Schutter promised to do everything he could to get her there.

While I was occupied with rehearsals and all the other preparations, the unfortunate director of the English company was busy ruining herself. The guileless actress had been counting on the continued enthusiasm of the Parisians and on the support of the new school of writers who three years earlier had lauded both Shakespeare and his interpreter to the skies. But Shakespeare was no longer a novelty to the feckless and frivolous public. The literary revolution demanded by the romantics had been achieved; and not only were the leaders of the movement not eager for any further demonstration of the power of the greatest of all dramatic poets: unconsciously, they feared it. It was not in their interests that the public should become too familiar with works from which they had borrowed so extensively.

The result was that the English company excited little response, and receipts were low. It had been an expensive venture. The season showed a deficit which absorbed the imprudent director's entire capital. This was the situation when Schutter called on Miss Smithson and offered her a box for my concert, and this is what ensued. She herself told me long afterwards.

Schutter found her in a state of profound despondency, and his proposal was at first badly received. At such a moment it was hardly to be expected she should have time for music. But Miss Smithson's sister joined with him in urging her to accept: it would be a distraction for her; and an English actor, who was with them, on his side appeared anxious to take advantage of the offer. A cab was summoned, and Miss

28. Maurice Schlesinger (1798-1871), who was to publish the *Fantastic Symphony*.

Smithson allowed herself, half willingly, half forcibly, to be escorted into it. The triumphant Schutter gave the address: "The Conservatoire," and they were off. On the way the unhappy creature glanced at the programme. My name had not been mentioned. She now learnt that I was the originator of the proceedings. The title of the symphony and the headings of the various movements somewhat astonished her; but it never so much as occurred to her that the heroine of this strange and doleful drama might be herself.

On entering the stage box above a sea of musicians (for I had collected a very large orchestra), she was aware of a buzz of interest all over the hall. Everyone seemed to be staring in her direction; a thrill of emotion went through her, half excitement, half fear, which she could not clearly account for. Habeneck was conducting. When I came in and sat breathlessly down behind him, Miss Smithson, who until then had supposed she might have mistaken the name at the head of the programme, recognized me. "Yes, it is he," she murmured; "poor young man, I expect he has forgotten me; at least . . . I hope he has." The symphony began and produced a tremendous effect. (Those were days when the hall of the Conservatoire, from which I am now excluded, was the focus of immense public enthusiasm.) The brilliant reception, the passionate character of the work, its ardent, exalted melodies, its protestations of love, its sudden outbursts of violence, and the sensation of hearing an orchestra of that size close to, could not fail to make an impression—an impression as profound as it was totally unexpected—on her nervous system and poetic imagination, and in her heart of hearts she thought, "Ah, if he still loved me!" During the interval which followed the performance of the symphony, the ambiguous remarks of Schutter, and of Schlesinger too—for he had been unable to resist coming into her box—and their veiled allusions to the cause of this young composer's well-known troubles of the heart, began to make her suspect the truth, and she heard them in growing agitation. But when Bocage,²⁹ the actor who spoke the part of Lélío (that is, myself), declaimed these lines:

Oh, if I could only find her, the Juliet, the Ophelia whom my heart cries out for! If I could drink deep of the mingled joy and sadness that real love offers us, and one autumn evening on some wild heath with the north wind blowing over it, lie in her arms and sleep a last, long, sorrowful sleep!

"God!" she thought: "Juliet—Ophelia! Am I dreaming? I can no longer doubt. It is of me he speaks. He loves me still." From that moment, so she has often told me, she felt the room reel about her; she heard no more but sat in a dream, and at the end returned home like a sleepwalker, with no clear notion of what was happening.

The date was 9th December 1832.³⁰

29. The stage name of Pierre-Martinien Tousez (1797–1863), a popular actor of the day.

30. *Memoirs*, pp. 214–17.

It must be remembered that even now Miss Smithson had never actually met her distant suitor! That confrontation finally took place the next day. From then on events moved quickly. The two were married the following fall.

Within a few years they were miserable. They were formally separated in 1844, and Harriet died in 1854. The same year Berlioz married Marie Recio (1814–62), a singer who had long been his mistress; he was not happy with her either. But these depressing events are not really germane to our narrative. The early history of the *Fantastic Symphony* should end on October 3, 1833, the wedding day of Hector Berlioz and his Henriette, with the hope that the two live happily ever after.

The Symphony and the Program

The relationship between the program and the music of the *Fantastic Symphony* has been the source of as much discussion and controversy as the music itself. Is a familiarity with the program necessary to an understanding of the music? Or is it actually detrimental to the musical experience? Is the symphony viable as absolute music? Did Berlioz write the music to fit the program or vice versa? And so on.

Certainly the program was one element—perhaps the chief element—that captured the imagination of the contemporary public. It was not so much the mere existence of the accompanying story—the device was already common enough in those days—as its sensational nature, with its suggestions of mingled sexuality and diabolism. But should one go so far as to conclude, with Barzun, that it can be “relegated . . . to the role of promotional aid”?¹ Or should one accept Hugh Macdonald’s opposite point of view, that “it is a fashionable analytical folly that urges us to consider the work as ‘pure music’”?² Perhaps the correct point of view is somewhere between the two: “With Berlioz the programme was often as much a matter of inspiration as the music itself. As a rule, the music was composed first, and an appropriate title found afterward.”³

One reason for this diversity of opinion is that Berlioz’s own position on program music underwent modification over the years. This development can be traced, first in a series of documents relating specifically to the *Fantastic Symphony*, and then in an essay on the subject in general that the composer published in 1837.

1. *Berlioz and the Romantic Century*, 3rd ed., New York, 1969, I, 162.

2. From the jacket of the recording by Ernest Ansermet and the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, London Records Inc., CSA 2101.

3. Tom S. Wotton, *Berlioz: Four Works*, London, 1929, p. 5.

The proper title of the symphony, according to the manuscript and the announcements of the first performance, is *Épisode de la vie d'un artiste, Symphonie fantastique en cinq parties*. This order is preserved in the first printed edition (Paris: Maurice Schlesinger, 1845; the work is here given an opus number, 14, and dedicated to Czar Nicholas I of Russia). The important point is that the composer evidently considered the formal description *Symphonie fantastique* as a mere subtitle. But at least one later printing of substantially the same edition (Paris: G. Brandus & S. Dufour), which Cecil Hopkinson places “after 1858,”⁴ reverses title and subtitle; *Symphonie fantastique, Première partie de l'Épisode de la vie d'un artiste, oeuvre lyrique* is now the complete heading. Berlioz probably chose this new wording and in any case almost certainly approved it, since a copy of this printing in the Bibliothèque Nationale contains notes and corrections in the master’s own hand. The title reflects the connection of the symphony with its sequel, *Lélio* (since it is now only “Part One of the Episode”); but, since the word *Symphonie* so conspicuously predominates in the new typographical layout, the reversal may also indicate the composer’s altered attitude toward the importance of his program—of which more later.

The title page of the manuscript (also in the Bibliothèque Nationale) contains two epigraphs that Berlioz may once have intended to appear in the published edition, although neither was ever so used. Like the reference to Chateaubriand to be embodied, as we shall see, in the program, these show Berlioz adducing literary parallels for the state of mind he wished to convey musically. The shorter of the two is a French translation of the familiar lines from *King Lear* (IV, 1):

Like flies to wanton boys are we to the gods:
They kill us for their sport.

The other is a lengthy quotation from the first poem of Victor Hugo’s *Feuilles d'automne*. This was published in 1831, so the quotation could hardly have been attached to the symphony before the period of its revision in Rome. The same lines appeared as an epigraph to the libretto of *Lélio* when it was published in 1832:

Certes, plus d'un vieillard, sans flamme, sans cheveux,
Tombé de lassitude au bout de tous ses vœux,
Pâlirait s'il voyait, comme un gouffre dans l'onde,
Mon âme où ma pensée habite comme un monde,

4. *A Bibliography of the Musical and Literary Works of Hector Berlioz 1803-69*, Edinburgh, 1951, p. 76, No. 36-B (d).

Tout ce que j'ai souffert, tout ce que j'ai tenté,
 Tout ce qui m'a menti comme un fruit avorté,
 Mon plus beau temps passé sans espoir qu'il renaisse,
 Les amours, les travaux, les deuils de ma jeunesse,
 Et quoi qu'encor a l'âge où l'avenir sourit,
 Le livre de mon coeur à toute page écrit.

These gloomy sentiments may be approximated in English blank verse thus:

Sure, more than one old man, burnt out and bald,
 Reduced through weariness to desiring naught,
 Would blanch could he but see my whirlpool soul,
 The world wherein my thought has found its home,
 All I have suffered, all I have essayed,
 All that's deluded me like stunted fruit,
 My best of life gone, never to return,
 The labors, loves, and sorrows of my youth,
 And, though the future smile on one my age,
 My heart's book written out on every page.

The headings of the five movements in the autograph accord with the plan indicated to Humbert Ferrand in the letter of April 16, 1830 (henceforth to be called simply "the Letter"; see pp. 7-9). In the first movement, the title *Réveries* is applied to the introductory Largo; *Passions*, to the following Allegro. Thus the "double" nature to which the composer refers in the Letter is made clearer than in the printed editions, where *Réveries—Passions* is combined as a single heading. *Un Bal* and the *Scène aux champs* are now in that order (which evidently

AVERTISSEMENT

Le Compositeur a eu pour but de développer, dans ce qu'elles ont de musical, différentes situations de la vie d'un artiste. Le plan du drame instrumental, privé du secours de la parole, a besoin d'être exposé d'avance. Le programme¹ suivant doit donc être considéré comme le texte parlé d'un Opéra, servant à amener des morceaux de musique, dont il motive le caractère et l'expression.

1. La distribution de ce programme à l'auditoire, dans les concerts où figure cette symphonie, est indispensable à l'intelligence complète du plan dramatique de l'ouvrage.

became definitive very soon after the Letter was written). The last two movements, the *Marche du supplice* and the *Songe d'une nuit du sabbat*, are paired as parts of the dream: *Première* and *Seconde partie de la vision*. Berlioz for a time vacillated between the title given here to the fourth movement, *Marche du supplice*—"March of Execution" (literally, "Punishment") or "Execution March"—and the one that became standard, *Marche au supplice*—"March to (the Place of) Execution." (There is probably no significance in the eventual change from *du sabbat* to *de sabbat*.)

The story outlined to Ferrand was soon embodied in an official program. A manuscript draft became the source, first of a notice printed in *Figaro* on May 21, 1830, to prepare the public for the projected performance of May 30; next of a version in the *Revue musicale* of November 27, shortly before the actual première; then of the leaflets distributed at the première and at subsequent performances; and finally of the program as printed in the first edition of the score.⁵ These documents are all close enough in content and wording to be considered as variations of a single First Program. Here is its definitive form, as published with the score in 1845. (The original old-fashioned spelling has been modernized. The footnotes are those of Berlioz.)

5. A complete transcription of the draft and details of important subsequent changes are given by Julian Tiersot in his immensely helpful "Berlioziana," a serial publication in *Le Ménestrel* (see Bibliography). The fullest description of all variations among the versions of the program is to be found in Nicholas Temperley's edition of the *Fantastic Symphony* for the New Berlioz Edition (see Bibliography), pp. 167-70.

NOTE

The composer's intention has been to develop, insofar as they contain musical possibilities, various situations in the life of an artist. The outline of the instrumental drama, which lacks the help of words, needs to be explained in advance. The following program¹ should thus be considered as the spoken text of an opera, serving to introduce the musical movements, whose character and expression it motivates.

1. The distribution of this program to the audience, at concerts where this symphony is to be performed, is indispensable for a complete understanding of the dramatic outline of the work.

PROGRAMME.

PREMIÈRE PARTIE.

RÊVERIES.—PASSIONS.

L'Auteur suppose qu'un jeune musicien, affecté de cette maladie morale qu'un écrivain célèbre appelle le *VAGUE DES PASSIONS*, voit pour la première fois une femme qui réunit tous les charmes de l'être idéal que rêvait son imagination, et en devient éperdument épris. Par une singulière bizarrerie, l'image chérie ne se présente jamais à l'esprit de l'artiste que liée à une pensée musicale, dans laquelle il trouve un certain caractère passionné, mais noble et timide comme celui qu'il prête à l'objet aimé.

Ce reflet mélodique avec son modèle le poursuivent sans cesse comme une double idée fixe. Telle est la raison de l'apparition constante, dans tous les morceaux de la symphonie, de la mélodie qui commence le premier ALLEGRO. Le passage de cet état de rêverie mélancolique, interrompue par quelques accès de joie sans sujet, à celui d'une passion délirante, avec ses mouvements de fureur, de jalousie, ses retours de tendresse, ses larmes, ses consolations religieuses, est le sujet du premier morceau.

DEUXIÈME PARTIE.

UN BAL.

L'artiste est placé dans les circonstances de la vie les plus diverses, au milieu DU TUMULTE D'UNE FÊTE, dans la paisible contemplation des beautés de la nature; mais partout, à la ville, aux champs, l'image chérie vient se présenter à lui et jeter le trouble dans son âme.

TROISIÈME PARTIE.

SCÈNE AUX CHAMPS.

Se trouvant un soir à la campagne, il entend au loin deux pâtres qui dialoguent un *ranz des vaches*; ce duo pastoral, le lieu de la scène, le léger bruissement des arbres doucement agités par le vent, quelques motifs d'espérance qu'il a conçus depuis peu, tout concourt à rendre à son cœur un calme inaccoutumé, et à donner à ses idées une couleur plus

PROGRAM

PART ONE

REVERIES—PASSIONS

The author imagines that a young musician, afflicted with that moral disease that a well-known writer calls the *vague des passions*, sees for the first time a woman who embodies all the charms of the ideal being he has imagined in his dreams, and he falls desperately in love with her. Through an odd whim, whenever the beloved image appears before the mind's eye of the artist it is linked with a musical thought whose character, passionate but at the same time noble and shy, he finds similar to the one he attributes to his beloved.

This melodic image and the model it reflects pursue him incessantly like a double *idée fixe*. That is the reason for the constant appearance, in every moment of the symphony, of the melody that begins the first Allegro. The passage from this state of melancholy reverie, interrupted by a few fits of groundless joy, to one of frenzied passion, with its movements of fury, of jealousy, its return of tenderness, its tears, its religious consolations—this is the subject of the first movement.

PART TWO

A BALL

The artist finds himself in the most varied situations—in the midst of *the tumult of a party*, in the peaceful contemplation of the beauties of nature; but everywhere, in town, in the country, the beloved image appears before him and disturbs his peace of mind.

PART THREE

SCENE IN THE COUNTRY

Finding himself one evening in the country, he hears in the distance two shepherds piping a *ranz des vaches* in dialogue. This pastoral duet, the scenery, the quiet rustling of the trees gently brushed by the wind, the hopes he has recently found some reason to entertain—all concur in affording his heart an unaccustomed calm, and in giving a more

riante. Il réfléchit sur son isolement; il espère n'être bientôt plus seul. . . . Mais si elle le trompait! . . . Ce mélange d'espoir et de crainte, ces idées de bonheur troublées par quelques noirs pressentiments, forment le sujet de l'ADAGIO. A la fin, l'un des pâtres reprend le ranz des vaches; l'autre ne répond plus. . . . Bruit éloigné de tonnerre . . . solitude . . . silence . . .

QUATRIÈME PARTIE.
MARCHE AU SUPPLICE.

Ayant acquis la certitude que son amour est méconnu, l'artiste s'empoisonne avec de l'opium. La dose du narcotique, trop faible pour lui donner la mort, le plonge dans un sommeil accompagné des plus horribles visions. Il rêve qu'il a tué celle qu'il aimait, qu'il est condamné, conduit au supplice, et qu'il assiste à SA PROPRE EXÉCUTION. Le cortège s'avance aux sons d'une marche tantôt sombre et farouche, tantôt brillante et solennelle, dans laquelle un bruit sourd de pas graves succède sans transition aux éclats les plus bruyants. A la fin de la marche, les quatre premières mesures de l'IDÉE FIXE reparaissent comme une dernière pensée d'amour interrompue par le coup fatal.

CINQUIÈME PARTIE.
SONGE D'UNE NUIT DU SABBAT.

Il se voit au sabbat, au milieu d'une troupe affreuse d'ombres, de sorciers, de monstres de toute espèce, réunis pour ses funérailles. Bruits étranges, gémissements, éclats de rire, cris lointains auxquels d'autres cris semblent répondre. La mélodie aimée reparait encore, mais elle a perdu son caractère de noblesse et de timidité; ce n'est plus qu'un air de danse ignoble, trivial et grotesque; c'est elle qui vient au sabbat. . . . Rugissement de joie à son arrivée. . . . Elle se mêle à l'orgie diabolique. . . . Glas funèbre, parodie burlesque du *DIES IRAE*.¹ RONDE DU SABBAT. La ronde du sabbat et le *Dies irae* ensemble.

1. Hymn chanté dans les ceremonies funèbres de l'Église Catholique.

cheerful color to his ideas. He reflects upon his isolation; he hopes that his loneliness will soon be over.—But what if she were deceiving him!—This mingling of hope and fear, these ideas of happiness disturbed by black presentiments, form the subject of the Adagio. At the end one of the shepherds again takes up the *ranz des vaches*; the other no longer replies.—Distant sound of thunder—loneliness—silence.

PART FOUR
MARCH TO THE SCAFFOLD

Convinced that his love is unappreciated, the artist poisons himself with opium. The dose of the narcotic, too weak to kill him, plunges him into a sleep accompanied by the most horrible visions. He dreams that he has killed his beloved, that he is condemned and led to the scaffold, and that he is witnessing *his own execution*. The procession moves forward to the sounds of a march that is now sombre and fierce, now brilliant and solemn, in which the muffled noise of heavy steps gives way without transition to the noisiest clamor. At the end of the march the first four measures of the *idée fixe* reappear, like a last thought of love interrupted by the fatal blow.

PART FIVE
DREAM OF A WITCHES' SABBATH

He sees himself at the sabbath, in the midst of a frightful troop of ghosts, sorcerers, monsters of every kind, come together for his funeral. Strange noises, groans, bursts of laughter, distant cries which other cries seem to answer. The beloved melody appears again, but it has lost its character of nobility and shyness; it is no more than a dance tune, mean, trivial, and grotesque: it is she, coming to join the sabbath.—A roar of joy at her arrival.—She takes part in the devilish orgy.—Funeral knell, burlesque parody of the *Dies irae*,¹ *sabbath round-dance*. The sabbath round and the *Dies irae* combined.

1. Hymn sung in the funeral rites of the Catholic Church.

A comparison of the texts will show that this program, in diction as well as in content, is not very different from the one outlined in the Letter. Yet there are some important changes, and it is interesting to trace these through the successive stages of the first complete draft (which must have been written soon after the Letter) and the various published versions.

The title of the opening movement is lacking in the draft as well as in the Letter; *Figaro* gives it as *Réverie.—Existence passionnée*. The final title is more succinct and more neatly balanced; otherwise there seems to be no reason for the alteration. More significant is the change in the nature of the *idée fixe*—or in the composer's conception of it. This is already evident in the draft. There, instead of "grace and nobility," we find the "passionate, but at the same time noble and shy" character familiar from the definitive version. Did this reflect a new attitude toward the theme, toward the heroine of the story, or toward her real-life model? Probably all three, since they are inextricably intertwined.

At the end of the first movement, the "religious consolations" are mentioned only in later, revised versions of the printed leaflet. These reflect a major addition Berlioz made to the closing measures. The seam is clearly visible in the autograph, which discloses that the movement originally ended, much too abruptly, at the present m. 493.

By the time of the draft, the *Ball* had already been placed second, and its description had been established as the one we know. In contradistinction to the account in the Letter, which explains the dance scene specifically, the definitive version refers not only to this movement ("the tumult of a party," "in town") but to the next as well ("the beauties of nature," "in the country"). The final program for the latter, on the other hand, is more elaborate than the original one. In the draft, the implied soliloquy is even quoted in the first person ("I am *alone* in the world . . . but I shall soon be no longer *alone*," etc.). Berlioz may have felt later that this melodramatic change of style was too self-revealing, too intense in tone. The ending of this movement, too, must have undergone revision, for the image of the lonely shepherd threatened by the impending storm is found for the first time in the program as printed in the *Revue musicale* just before the première.

The successive descriptions of both the march and the witches' sabbath yield clues to Berlioz's gradually improving state of mind. Whether this was due to the charms of Mlle. Moke, or to the realization that the rumors about Henriette were false, or just to the passing of time, he cer-

tainly became less and less hard on his heroine. Compare the mild final version of the hero's reason for taking poison with this one, from the first draft: "Convinced not only that his adored one does not return his love, but that she is incapable of understanding it and moreover has become unworthy of it." (Later versions of this year differ only in detail.) But with respect to the last movement even the draft represents a considerable cooling off from the attitude of the Letter. There, the loved one was described as "a prostitute, fit to take part in such an orgy"; this phrase is never used again. The draft, although somewhat more detailed in its account of the sabbath, is essentially the same as the final version. *Figaro* presents the shortest description of all: it fails to mention the *Dies irae*. No doubt Berlioz felt later that this cut was too drastic and that more explanation here was essential; otherwise the audience might fail to grasp the musical structure of the movement. Hence he restored some of the draft, arriving at the definitive form.

In this cursory examination of the details relating to the individual movements we can thus recognize, in addition to the alterations made for personal reasons, others that reflect revisions of the score, that betray a concern for literary style, and that clarify the musical form. Now we must turn to the crucial introductory remarks; and here it will be necessary to look more closely at the leaflets prepared for the various public performances. Most of these differ only in detail from the one distributed at the première. But two of them, apparently associated with concerts several years later, contain an important addition: a huge footnote, or an essay disguised as a footnote, appended to the introductory paragraph.⁶

Now, the introduction, tentatively formed in the draft, received its definitive wording in the *Figaro* version, from which the leaflets and the first edition do not vary. It is a paragraph obviously intended as an important statement of the composer's esthetic. He tries to explain his approach to symphonic music by invoking the French *opéra comique* with its alternation of song and spoken dialogue. The opera composer determines which episodes, scenes, and emotional states in his drama are expressible in music; these he sets as musical numbers, connecting them with dialogue ("texte parlé"). In the same way, Berlioz has chosen certain situations from his artist's life that have musical possibilities ("ce qu'elles ont de musical"); these have become the movements of his

6. Temperley, *loc. cit.*, adduces evidence for 1836 and 1838 as the dates of these programs.

symphony. And just as the operatic dialogue leads into the numbers ("amener des morceaux"), explaining their meaning and motivating their expression, so Berlioz's program introduces each movement in turn.

Today all this seems clear enough. Yet Berlioz was evidently prompted to add still further explanation in defense of his point of view against the stubbornness of his critics.⁷ Accordingly, in an attempt to make the statement even more emphatic, the revised leaflet gave certain key phrases of the introduction typographical emphasis—*texte parlé d'un opéra, amener, motive le caractère et l'expression*, and especially DANS CE QU'ELLES ONT DE MUSICAL. And the following footnote, which spells out the same message in greater detail, was appended:

The aim of the program is by no means to copy faithfully what the composer has tried to present in orchestral terms, as some people seem to think; on the contrary, it is precisely in order to fill in the gaps which the use of musical language unavoidably leaves in the development of dramatic thought, that the composer has had to avail himself of written prose to explain and justify the outline of the symphony. He knows very well that music can take the place of neither word nor picture⁷; he has never had the absurd intention of expressing *abstractions* or *moral qualities*, but rather passions and feelings. Nor has he had the even stranger idea of painting *mountains*: he has only wished to reproduce *the melodic style and forms* that characterize the singing of some of the people who live among them, or *the emotion* that the sight of these imposing masses arouses, under certain circumstances, in the soul. If these few lines of program had been of such nature that they could be recited or sung between the movements of the symphony, like the choruses in ancient tragedies, then doubtless this kind of misunderstanding of their meaning would not have arisen. But instead of being heard they must be read; and those who make the curious accusation against which the musician must defend himself fail to realize that if he really entertained the exaggerated and ridiculous opinions about the expressive power of his art that are laid at his door, then by the same token he would have thought this program to be merely a kind of duplication, and hence perfectly useless.

As for the imitation of natural sounds, Beethoven, Gluck, Meyer-

7. He had felt misunderstood from the beginning. When the program was printed in the *Revue musicale*, it was preceded by an introductory editorial note that accused Berlioz of trying to use music to paint physical objects and to express abstractions. (Although unsigned, the note can safely be attributed to the editor, François-Joseph Fétis, who produced the journal almost single-handedly. See p. 215.)

beer, Rossini, and Weber have proved, by noteworthy examples, that it has its place in the musical realm. Nevertheless, since the composer of this symphony is convinced that the abuse of such imitation is quite dangerous, that it is of very limited usefulness, and that its happiest effects always verge on caricature, he has never considered this branch of the art as an end, but as a means. And when, for example, in the Scene in the Country, he tries to render the rumbling of distant thunder in the midst of a peaceful atmosphere, it is by no means for the puerile pleasure of imitating this majestic sound, but rather to make *silence* more perceptible, and thus to increase the impression of uneasy sadness and painful isolation that he wants to produce on his audience by the conclusion of this movement.

[This, then, is the composer's account of the purpose of the program: not to duplicate the music, but to fill in what the music has left unsaid. And the music was not to reproduce the events of the story, nor to depict its scenery, nor to expound abstract ideas, but to impart the passions and emotions aroused by the dramatic situations. Certainly this defense applies convincingly to the first three movements; less well, it must be confessed, to the last two. But even here it should be noted that the composer's chief concern, in the definitive program of the Finale, is the audience's awareness of what is going on *musically*; they should recognize the clarinet melody as a parody of the *idée fixe*, they should appreciate the polyphonic combination of the *Dies irae* and the round dance. Although we may not completely accept the composer's assurance that the program is never concerned with what he "has tried to present in orchestral terms," and although we may point to passages in which it "describes" the music, we must not assume that the music is thereby reduced to the role of "describing" the program. For the latter may be serving another purpose as well: it may be explicating purely musical relationships. True, Berlioz does not mention this possibility; but, as we have just seen, he certainly takes occasional advantage of it.

One other version of the First Program is worth mentioning, oddly enough because of an astounding bit of misinformation offered on its title page: 1820 is given as the year of the première! It may thus well be the source of a notorious error in Schumann's essay on the symphony.⁸ This becomes highly probable if we accept Temperley's conjecture that the pamphlet was printed in 1834 to accompany Liszt's piano transcription, which, as the first publication of the symphony, was the form

8. See pp. 223 and 228.

in which Schumann became familiar with it.⁹

The first performance that presented the *Fantastic Symphony* together with its sequel, *Lélio*, took place on the famous occasion of December 9, 1832. Berlioz evidently saw no reason at this time to make any substantial changes in the First Program, which is in fact printed as a preface to the libretto of *Lélio* published by Schlesinger in anticipation of the concert. No doubt the composer had not yet realized that the addition of the monodrama significantly altered the expressive effect of the symphony and that a new program might therefore be desirable. Moreover, he knew very well that combined performances of the two works would be relatively rare. At any rate, the First Program remained standard for many years. It was, as we know, the one included in the published score of 1845. Indeed, this edition made no mention of *Lélio*, either on the title page or in the program, presumably because the mono-

9. Temperley, *loc. cit.*

AVERTISSEMENT.

Le programme suivant doit être distribué à l'auditoire toutes les fois que la symphonie fantastique est exécutée *dramatiquement* et suivie, en conséquence, du monodrame de *Lélio*,¹ qui termine et complète *l'épisode de la vie d'un artiste*. En pareil cas, l'orchestre invisible est disposé sur la scène d'un théâtre derrière la toile baissée.²

Si on exécute la symphonie isolément dans un concert, cette disposition n'est plus nécessaire; on peut même à la rigueur se dispenser de distribuer le programme, en conservant seulement le titre des cinq morceaux; la symphonie (l'auteur l'espère) pouvant offrir en soi un intérêt musical indépendant de toute intention dramatique.

PROGRAMME de la Symphonie.

Un jeune musicien d'une sensibilité malade et d'une imagination ardente, s'empoisonne avec de l'opium dans un accès de désespoir amoureux. La dose de narcotique, trop faible pour lui donner la mort,

1. Publié chez Richault à Paris.

2. Voyez pour les détails de cette mise en scène la préface de la grande partition de *Lélio*.

drama was still unready for publication. Hence Berlioz must have assumed that the symphony would normally be performed alone.

At some point, however, a new program was devised, specifically designed for performances that included *Lélio*. That work was published in 1855, and it is likely that the Second Program replaced the First in the printed scores with this eventuality—or actuality—in view. The version reproduced below, taken from the edition of Brandus & Dufour described on p. 19, refers in footnotes to the availability of the score of *Lélio*.

The new program was accompanied in parallel columns by a German translation that indicated the spread of Berlioz's international reputation. He had introduced the symphony to Germany in 1842 and obviously hoped for further performances there.

Here, then, is the Second Program. As before, the original orthography has been modernized, and a few misprints have been corrected.

NOTE

The following program should be distributed to the audience whenever the *Fantastic Symphony* is executed *dramatically* and consequently followed by the monodrama *Lélio*,¹ which finishes and completes the *Episode from the Life of an Artist*. In such cases, the orchestra should be unseen, placed on the stage of a theater behind the lowered curtain.²

If the symphony alone is performed in a concert, this arrangement is no longer essential; if necessary, one can even dispense with distributing the program, keeping only the titles of the five movements. The symphony by itself (the author hopes) can afford musical interest independent of any dramatic purpose.

PROGRAM of the Symphony

A young musician of morbidly sensitive temperament and fiery imagination poisons himself with opium in a fit of lovesick despair. The dose of the narcotic, too weak to kill him, plunges him into a deep slumber

1. Published by Richault, Paris.

2. For the details of this mise-en-scène see the preface to the full score of *Lélio*.

le plonge dans un lourd sommeil accompagné des plus étranges visions, pendant lequel ses sensations, ses sentiments, ses souvenirs se traduisent dans son cerveau malade, en pensées et en images musicales. La femme aimée, elle-même, est devenue pour lui une mélodie et comme une idée fixe qu'il retrouve et qu'il entend partout.

1^{er} PARTIE.

RÊVERIES, PASSIONS.

Il se rappelle d'abord ce malaise de l'âme, *ce vague des passions*, ces mélancolies, ces joies sans sujet qu'il éprouva avant d'avoir vu celle qu'il aime; puis l'amour volcanique qu'elle lui inspira subitement, ses délirantes angoisses, ses jalouses fureurs, ses retours de tendresse, ses consolations religieuses.

2^{me} PARTIE.

UN BAL.

Il retrouve l'aimée dans un bal au milieu du tumulte d'une fête brillante.

3^{me} PARTIE.

SCÈNE AUX CHAMPS.

Un soir d'été à la campagne, il entend deux pâtres qui dialoguent un Ranz des vaches; ce duo pastoral, le lieu de la scène, le léger bruissement des arbres doucement agités par le vent, quelques motifs d'espoir qu'il a conçus depuis peu, tout concourt à rendre à son cœur un calme inaccoutumé, à donner à ses idées une couleur plus riante; mais *elle* apparaît de nouveau, son cœur se serre, de douloureux pressentiments l'agitent, si elle le trompait. . . . L'un des pâtres reprend sa naïve mélodie, l'autre ne répond plus. Le soleil se couche . . . bruit éloigné du tonnerre solitude silence

4^{me} PARTIE.

MARCHE AU SUPPLICE.

Il rêve qu'il a tué celle qu'il aimait, qu'il est condamné à mort, conduit au supplice. Le cortège s'avance, aux sons d'une marche tantôt sombre et farouche, tantôt brillante et solennelle, dans laquelle un bruit

accompanied by the strangest visions, during which his sensations, his emotions, his memories are transformed in his sick mind into musical thoughts and images. The loved one herself has become a melody to him, an *idée fixe* as it were, that he encounters and hears everywhere.

PART I

REVERIES, PASSIONS

He recalls first that soul-sickness, that *vague des passions*, those depressions, those groundless joys, that he experienced before he first saw his loved one; then the volcanic love that she suddenly inspired in him, his frenzied suffering, his jealous rages, his returns to tenderness, his religious consolations.

PART II

A BALL

He encounters the loved one at a dance in the midst of the tumult of a brilliant party.

PART III

SCENE IN THE COUNTRY

One summer evening in the country, he hears two shepherds piping a *ranz des vaches* in dialogue; this pastoral duet, the scenery, the quiet rustling of the trees gently brushed by the wind, the hopes he has recently found some reason to entertain—all concur in affording his heart an unaccustomed calm, and in giving a more cheerful color to his ideas. But she appears again, he feels a tightening in his heart, painful presentiments disturb him—what if she were deceiving him?—One of the shepherds takes up his simple tune again, the other no longer answers. The sun sets—distant sound of thunder—loneliness—silence.

PART IV

MARCH TO THE SCAFFOLD

He dreams that he has killed his beloved, that he is condemned to death and led to the scaffold. The procession moves forward to the sounds of a march that is now somber and fierce, now brilliant and solemn, in

sourd de pas graves succède sans transition aux éclats les plus bruyants. A la fin, l'*idée fixe* reparait un instant comme une dernière pensée d'amour interrompue par le coup fatal.

5^{me} PARTIE.

SONGE D'UNE NUIT DU SABBAT.

Il se voit au sabbat, au milieu d'une troupe affreuse d'ombres, de sorciers, de monstres, de toute espèce réunis pour ses funérailles. Bruits étranges, gémissements, éclats de rire, cris lointains auxquels d'autres cris semblent répondre. La *mélodie-aimée* reparait encore; mais elle a perdu son caractère de noblesse et de timidité; ce n'est plus qu'un air de danse ignoble, trivial et grotesque; c'est *elle* qui vient au sabbat. . . . Rugissement de joie à son arrivée. . . . Elle se mêle à l'orgie diabolique. . . . Glas funèbre, parodie burlesque du *Dies irae*. Ronde du sabbat. La ronde du sabbat et le *Dies irae* ensemble.

Two questions immediately demand discussion. Why did Berlioz extend the opium dream so as to include all five movements? Why did he suggest performance without the distribution of the program?

The answers can only be conjectured. With regard to the first, the connection with *Lélio* may well have been the determining factor. *Lélio* depicted the awakening; it was an extended work with six movements interspersed by long monologues. It might then make for better dramatic balance to allow the entire symphony to represent the dream. Such a plan would also be more immediately apprehensible to the audience: symphony = dream, monodrama = awakening.

As for the permission to dispense with the program altogether, I think one should take at face value the composer's hope that the work would offer sufficient "musical interest independent of any dramatic purpose." In this wish he was probably encouraged by the artistic success of *Harold in Italy*, a program symphony, to be sure, but one without a program. There he had found the titles alone sufficed. And after all, the extension of the dream through the entire symphony implied, in a way, a denigration of the whole programmatic idea. Berlioz certainly realized that whatever music can or cannot portray, there is no way that music alone can distinguish between the depiction (a) of an experience, (b) of

which the muffled sound of heavy steps gives way without transition to the noisiest clamor. At the end, the *idée fixe* returns for a moment, like a last thought of love interrupted by the fatal blow.

PART V

DREAM OF A WITCHES' SABBATH

[The program for this movement reproduces the First Program.]

a memory of the experience, and (c) of a dream about the experience. The distinction between waking and dream in the earlier program had thus been artificial and nonmusical, and the obliteration of the division might have been a confession that the descriptive powers of music were even more limited than the composer had hitherto admitted. It is possible, then, that the new program was his way of telling the audience: "Look, don't take all this too seriously; it's only a dream. The main thing is the music."